

Prestige Class **Ultimate Magus**

At One with Magic
By Creighton Broadhurst



This column aims to provide players with tips on creating effective and interesting characters of various types. Whether you're a beginning player creating your very first character or an experienced gamer looking to put some punch into an old standby, this column is for you.

Assets

The ultimate magus is an attractive prestige class that grants members many useful abilities.

- **Easy Qualification:** Ultimate magus is a surprisingly easy prestige class for which to qualify. Prospective members only require four ranks in Knowledge (arcana), eight ranks in Spellcraft, a metamagic feat, and the ability to spontaneously cast 1st-level arcane spells and to prepare 2nd-level arcane spells. Any self-respecting arcane spellcaster is easily going to take the requisite skills and feat -- Spellcraft and Knowledge (arcana) are essential parts of their abilities. A 4th-level wizard/1st-level sorcerer can easily qualify for this prestige class.
- **Good Will Saves:** An ultimate magus uses the best progression for Will saving throws (see Table 3-1, PHB) in the game. Added to the bonuses gained from both her previous classes, she has a truly impressive Will save.
- **Excellent Spell Progression:** The ultimate magus prestige class offers excellent spell progression to its adherents in terms of the sheer number of spell available to cast. The class offers caster level progression (and even spells known) in two classes. Members gain an additional caster level in at least one spellcasting class with all levels of ultimate magus gained. At 1st and 4th level, though, they gain an additional caster level only in their arcane spellcasting class with the fewest levels. At all other levels, they gain an additional caster level in both a spontaneous arcane casting class and a prepared arcane spell casting class.
- **Good Class Abilities:** An ultimate magus has a good range of class abilities that enhance both of her class's spellcasting abilities. They gain one or more ability or bonus feats at each level. Several of their abilities -- in particular, expanded spell knowledge and augment casting -- allow them to use the abilities of one class to boost the efficiency or power of the other's spells!



Weaknesses

The ultimate magus's advantages come at a price. Here are a few things to consider when thinking about an ultimate magus character.

- **Low Hit Points:** An ultimate magus uses 4-sided Hit Dice, making them very vulnerable in a fight.
- **Poor Fortitude and Reflex Saves:** An ultimate magus has the worst progression for Reflex and Fortitude saving throws in the game. Unfortunately, these poor saving throws often stack with poor saving throw bonuses given by the classes a character used to qualify for this prestige class.
- **Spells:** Although an ultimate magus can cast many spells every day, she often misses out on the truly powerful spells that prove decisive in battle. For example, a duskblade 4/wizard 3/ultimate magus 3 (ten character levels) casts spells as only a 6th-level duskblade or 7th-level wizard. A 10th-level wizard can pack much more of a punch, casting 5th-level spells.
- **Poor Attack Bonus:** The ultimate magus has the worst base attack bonus in the game (equal to a wizard's).
- **Loss of Class Abilities:** Although advancing as an ultimate magus grants additional spellcasting abilities in both previously gained arcane spellcasting classes, the character does not get any other benefits from those classes. For example, a duskblade 4/wizard 3/ultimate magus 3 (ten character levels) has only the

class abilities of a 4th-level duskblade and a 3rd-level wizard. Similarly, if she has a familiar, it has only the abilities granted by a 3rd-level master.

Playing an Ultimate Magus

People who want to play an efficient ultimate magus should keep the following in mind.

It's all in the Class

Give serious thought to which classes you will take to qualify for ultimate magus before starting your character. Because you need to be able to prepare 2nd-level arcane spells and to spontaneously cast 1st-level arcane spells, you need to have levels in at least two arcane spellcasting classes. Look at the lists below to determine what classes you could take levels in to satisfy these criteria.

Prepared Arcane Spells: specialist wizard, wizard, or wu jen (*Complete Arcane*).

Spontaneously Cast Arcane Spells: beguiler (*Player's Handbook II*), bard, duskblade (*Player's Handbook II*), hexblade (*Complete Warrior*), sorcerer, spellthief (*Complete Adventurer*), or warmage (*Complete Arcane*).

Your choice of classes will, to a certain extent, determine your role within the party. An ultimate magus in a small group may feel it is prudent to have some combat ability, so taking levels in hexblade or duskblade would be a good idea. Others may take levels in spellthief to compensate for a lack of rogue, with the ultimate goal of taking levels in arcane trickster.

Skills and Feats

Once you have picked the classes your character will use to qualify for ultimate magus, you need to look carefully at what skills and feats to invest in. Obviously, you need to meet the requirements of the class -- four ranks in Knowledge (arcana), eight ranks in Spellcraft, and a metamagic feat -- but beyond that, you need to offset the prestige class's weaknesses and build upon its strengths. Concentration, Knowledge (arcana), and Spellcraft should be maxed out if possible. Depending on the style of campaign, some or all of the other Knowledge skills as well as Decipher Script could prove useful.

For feats, an ultimate magus should seriously consider Practiced Spellcaster (*Complete Arcane/Complete Divine*) for one or both of her classes. Great Fortitude and Lightning Reflexes are also solid choices to offset the class's weak Fortitude and Reflex saves. Choice of metamagic feats really depends on what kind of spells the character is going to use primarily. Taking multiple metamagic feats gives an ultimate magus more flexibility when using his augmented casting ability.

Spells and Magic

Although you will likely be able to cast many more spells per day than your single-classed wizard and cleric companions, you'll be unable to match them in terms of raw power. Thus, consider your spell choice carefully. In many ways, this prestige class better suits spellcasters who do not focus on dealing vast amounts of damage with *fireball*, *cone of cold*, and the like (unless you take feats such as Empower Spell and Maximize Spell). Rather, focus on boosting and augmenting your companions, as well as intelligence gathering. (The description of the ultimate magus in *Complete Mage* provides extensive advice on the subject of spell choice).

When buying magic items, consider purchasing items to boost your spellcasting abilities and augment your defenses. Stat-boosting items (particularly if your two base classes use the same stat for spellcasting) are a great purchase, as are metamagic rods. Don't forget the oft-overlooked ioun stones -- the *orange prism version* boosts the owner's caster level. Purchase as many *pearls of power* (any usable level) as possible. Finally, don't neglect your defenses. Having a high AC and good saving throws are vital to your long-term survival. Invest in a *ring of protection*, *amulet of natural armor*, and a *cloak of resistance* as soon as possible.

Sample Ultimate Magus: Dorian Jarevar

This short, stocky, heavily-armored dwarf carries a dwarven waraxe over one shoulder.

DORIAN JAREVAR, CR 11

Male dwarf duskblade 4/diviner 3/ultimate magus 4

LG Medium humanoid (dwarf)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +2

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarf, Terran, Undercommon

AC 23, touch 12, flat-footed 21; +4 dodge against giant-type creatures

(+2 Dex, +9 armor, +2 shield)

hp 67 (82 with *false life*) (11 HD)

Resist bull rush, trip (+4)

Fort +9 (+11 against poison), **Ref** +7, **Will** +11; +2 against spells and spell-like effects

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares)

Melee +1 *dwarven waraxe* +10/+5 (1d10+2) or mwk cold iron darkwood longspear +9/+4 (1d8+1)

Ranged mwk heavy crossbow +10 (1d10/19-20)

Base Atk +7; **Grp** +8

Atk Options +1 against orcs and goblinoids, arcane channeling

Special Actions augment casting

Combat Gear 2 potions of *cure moderate wounds*

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 13; 30% arcane spell failure chance; ranged touch +9):

4th -- *arcane eye*, *stoneskin*

3rd -- *clairaudience/clairvoyance*, *displacement*, extended *false life** (15 hp), *vampiric touch*

2nd -- *blur*, extended *enlarge person*, *false life*, *see invisibility*, *web*

1st -- *enlarge person*, *feather fall*, *hold portal*, *true strike* (x3)

0 -- *prestidigitation*, *mage hand*, *message*, *resistance*

* Already cast

Duskblade Spells Known (CL 12; 0% arcane spell failure chance; melee touch +8, ranged touch +9):

2nd (4/day) -- *animalistic power**, *ghoul touch* (DC 15), *touch of idiocy*

1st (7/day) -- *blade of blood**, *chill touch*, *color spray* (DC 14), *resist energy*, *shocking grasp*, *swift expeditious retreat***

0 (6/day) -- *acid splash*, *disrupt undead*, *ray of frost*, *touch of fatigue* (DC 13)

*new spell detailed in *Player's Handbook II*

**new spell detailed in the *Spell Compendium*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 10):

6/day (combined total) -- *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 13), *ghost sound* (DC 13), *read magic*

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 6

SQ arcane attunement, armored mage (medium), dwarf traits, expanded spell knowledge (*chill touch*, *ghoul touch*), weasel familiar

Feats Alertness (if familiar within 5 ft.), Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Practiced Spellcaster (duskblade), Practiced Spellcaster (wizard), Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe)

Skills Concentration +16 (+20 casting defensively), Knowledge (arcana)+16, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +8, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +4, Knowledge (geography) +4, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nature) +4, Knowledge (the planes) +16, Listen +2, Search +0 (+2 unusual stonework, +4 secret doors), Spellcraft +18, Spot +2

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *mithril full plate*, +1 *light steel shield*, masterwork heavy crossbow with 10 bolts, masterwork cold iron darkwood longspear, 50 gp

Spellbook (barred schools: enchantment) spells prepared plus all 0; 1st -- *chill touch*, *expeditious retreat*, *grease*, *hold portal*, *ventriloquism*; 2nd -- *blur*, *mirror image*, *protection from arrows*; 3rd -- *blink*, *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *haste*

Arcane Channeling As a standard action, Dorian can cast any touch spell with a casting time of 1 standard action or less and deliver it through his weapon with a melee attack. If the attack is successful, the attack deals damage normally; then the effect of the spell is resolved.

Augment Casting Dorian can sacrifice a spell or spell slot from one of his classes to apply Extend Spell to a 2nd-level or lower spell cast by his other arcane class. He loses the sacrificed spell slot (which must equal or exceed the spell level adjustment of the metamagic feat) as if he had cast the spell. He can do this 5/day.

Armored Mage While wearing medium armor and carrying a light shield, Dorian can cast any duskblade spell with no chance of arcane spell failure.

Dorian had the following ability scores before racial adjustments and Hit Dice ability score increases: Str 12, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Feedback

Have a spell combination you use with the spellwarp sniper? Any additional advice you would include for this prestige class? Let us know, at dndfeedback@wizards.com.

About the Author

Creighton Broadhurst is a member of [Living Greyhawk](#)'s Circle of Six and a mad-keen **World of Greyhawk** fan. His hobbies include trying to stop his house falling down (which appears to be harder than you would think) and trying to survive the Savage Tide (which appears to be harder than you would think). He can be reached at creighton@greyworks.co.uk

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